

On behalf of the Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorder, we are writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 380. This important legislation aims to enhance the training and education of peace officers regarding interactions with individuals who have developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

The requirement for peace officers to complete training that includes at least four hours of in-person instruction on specific topics related to autism spectrum disorders is a crucial step toward fostering a more informed and compassionate law enforcement community. Individuals with ASD often experience unique challenges in communication and social interaction, which can lead to misunderstandings during encounters with law enforcement. By equipping officers with the knowledge and skills to recognize and respond appropriately to these individuals, we can promote safer and more effective interactions.

Furthermore, the inclusion of continuing education requirements for peace officers ensures that they remain updated on best practices for engaging with persons with developmental disabilities. This ongoing training is essential for reinforcing the importance of understanding the diverse needs of individuals with ASD and for fostering a culture of empathy and respect within law enforcement.

Additionally, the provisions in SB 380 that allow applicants for registration as registered behavior technicians to engage in the practice of applied behavior analysis under the direct supervision of a licensed behavior analyst until their application is processed will help address the growing demand for qualified professionals in the field. This change will ensure that individuals with autism spectrum disorders have timely access to necessary services, which is critical for their development and well-being.

In conclusion, we urge you to support SB 380 as it represents a significant advancement in the training of peace officers and the provision of services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. By enhancing the understanding and responsiveness of law enforcement, we can create a safer and more supportive environment for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.